

**THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS ON
ADOLESCENT SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR AMONG SECONDARY
SCHOOLS IN EMBU COUNTY- KENYA**

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Abstract

Promotion of sexual health in Kenya has led to the identification of addressable risk factors for adolescent sexual behaviour like sex with multiple partners, and unsafe sex. Since they are reached widely and controls great exposure, social media networks may be one such modifiable risk factor. This study was done with an aim to investigate the role of social media on sexual behaviour of secondary school students in Embu County. The explosion of social media networks may present new challenges on sexual behaviour of adolescents. Despite the widespread use of social media networks among adolescent; there is a dearth of empirical evidence on the role of social media networks on adolescent sexual behavior. Thus, the aim of the study was to fill this research gap. The study was informed by Social learning theory and social networking theory. The study used mixed methodology and adopted the descriptive survey and phenomenology research designs. The study used 10 percent of the total target population as its sample. The researcher randomly selected 10 students per every secondary school that made a sample size of 130 Form three students, 10 percent (13 teachers) of the guidance and counseling teachers and 10 percent of the principals in secondary schools in Embu County Kenya. The data collection instruments were questionnaires, modified Rosenberg scale and focus group discussion guides. It included the mixed methods approach involving quantitative, and qualitative data collection since the data collected was produced in both numbers and words. After the fieldwork, all questionnaires were thoroughly checked for reliability and validity. The findings from the study were that 84.6 percent of the students used social media while the remaining 15.4 percent did not use. Facebook was ranked highest as the most commonly used social site with 46.2 percent of the respondents and was followed by twitter 13.6 percent. The students used the accounts very frequently at 61.5 percent, others frequently which was at 30.8 percent and the moderately frequent at 7.7 percent. Many of the students strongly agreed that the use of the social sites affected their sexual behavior. The study would recommend that there be proper guidance and counseling of the secondary school students to utilize the social networking sites positively. The students should be taught the probable harm that the students may face if they misuse the social media networks platforms. They should be taught the dangers of borrowed behaviour from the use of social media like unprotected sex leading to STI's and STD's. The lessons will be best for taking care of their privacy, lifestyle, psychological health and their social and sexual relationships as a result of frequent use of social media network sites.